

# BULLETIN

American Association of School Social Workers

VOL. XIX.

JUNE, 1944

No. 2

## PRESENT-DAY ATTITUDES TOWARD THE FEEBLE-MINDED\*

by

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*Brief Historical Review*

In ages prior to this, estimates of mental and social competency were highly unscientific. Unfortunates who were unable to adapt themselves to society were considered to be "different" and were thereupon treated according to those unscientific standards of the civilization in which they happened to live. As Miss Bernadine Smith points out in her study on Training of Educable Mental Defectives, "In some cultures they were shunned, ostracized, persecuted, or thought to be demon-possessed, while in others their presence was sought for purposes of entertainment and merry making."<sup>1</sup>

The beginning of more scientific evaluation of mental retardation came as a result of the work of Itard and his follower, Sequin, in France in the 18th century, when it was demonstrated that training is possible for the feeble-minded. Itard's work became the basis for the theory of custodial care for this group about the time institutions were being developed for the deaf and the blind. Due to incomplete diagnoses and lack of understanding of the true nature of mental retardation, however, all persons considered feeble-minded were thrown into institutions in an undifferentiated fashion. This caused overcrowding, which, with inadequate staffs and programs, resulted in institutional programs offering little more than custodial care, and that sometimes not of a very high order. The work of Binet and Simon in the field of mental testing at the beginning of the twentieth century placed great emphasis on the results of standardized psychological

1. Bernadine Smith, "Training of Educable Mental Defectives" (Unpublished Master's Thesis - School of Social Work, Tulane University, 1941) p. 1.

\*This is material from an unpublished Master's Thesis, Tulane University, School of Social Work, New Orleans 1943.

tests as the chief criterion for determining feeble-mindedness. Since it was also considered at this time that the intelligence so measured was largely an inherited factor, segregation of the feeble-minded was considered an important preventive measure. When the use of psychological tests became more widespread and it was found that many delinquents were also mentally retarded, there came to be a suspicion that these were concomitants. This naturally led to the development of a program of sterilization believed to offer society protection from the menace of increasing numbers of feeble-minded.

Psychologists began, however, to make a better evaluation of the scope and true nature of mental retardation following a study of the results of the group psychological examinations given the soldiers in World War I. Using a classification based on that which has been recommended to the American Association for the Study of Feeble-minded by Goddard in 1910<sup>2</sup>, somewhere near fifty per cent of these boys would have been classed as feeble-minded. Even when various corrections were made the percentage was high. If this group could be considered a cross section of our American population the implications of these results were alarming. However, when further social data were secured regarding some of the young men thus classified as "morons" it was found that many of them were considered desirable and independent citizens in the communities from which they had come. Many had been carrying on their jobs successfully before induction into the army; some had been supporting families. It was realized that obviously there must be many other persons in civilian life, persons considered quite "normal" by their fellows, who would likewise earn scores from psychological tests which would show them to be mentally retarded. Psychological data alone, then, could not serve as the sole criterion for diagnosing feeble-mindedness. Social competency, too, must be taken into consideration. And just as there are varying degrees of mental retardation, so there are varying degrees of social competence.

There was an impetus to psychiatry, as well as to other sciences, occasioned by observations made during the last war, which increased understandings of human behavior. The importance of the total personality structure of the individual, with its accompanying emotional components was recognized as the motivating factor in many of the illnesses evidenced by soldiers, notably, "shell shock." Later, what might be considered as pseudo-debilities in individuals due to emotional factors resulted in studies of mentally retarded children becoming more precise. For example, children believed

2. C. P. Davies, "Social Control of the Mentally Deficient" p. 369.



"dull" because of speech retardation were found in many instances to be suffering from emotional maladjustments sufficient to result in marked delay in this development. When the causative factors were removed or modified, the child might begin to talk in a normal fashion for one of his age. While some false enthusiasms may have been aroused that intellectual capacity could be changed, this awareness that intellectual retardation could have more than one cause gave the careful clinical psychologist another area to consider when attempting to determine reliably the mental age of any given child. Using terminology of the psychoanalytic school of psychiatry, Brown makes the following statement regarding hypophrenia or "deficiency in intellection":

There are, however, some cases of hypophrenia where the deficiency is not great and where the disease can be considered primarily psychogenic in origin. In these individuals the integrating function of the ego—and this is what intelligence really amounts to—is not properly developed because of infantile anxiety. These forms of hypophrenia really belong to the neuroses.<sup>3</sup>

Before discussing further the contribution of the psychoanalytic concept of personality structure in its relation to mental retardation, mention should be made of studies pointing to the influence of environment upon the development of intellectual ability. Studies made by Sherman on children living in impoverish rural regions indicate that young children who grow up in such circumstances tend to have lower intelligence quotients than those living, for example, in urban areas.<sup>4</sup>

Among the best known studies of the influence of environment on intelligence are those of the Iowa Welfare Research Station at the State University of Iowa, and published as part of their Child Welfare Series. In his forward to one of the studies Dr. Stoddard, director of the Research Station states:

Of one thing we can be reasonably sure: the older idea that a gain or loss of as much as 20 I. Q. points must be exceedingly rare is definitely not valid for these young children. All measures of correlation and central tendency in this and allied station studies demonstrate that, for young children subjected to demonstrably changed environments, substantial shifts are the rule rather than the exception.<sup>5</sup>

3. J. F. Brown, "The Psychodynamics of Abnormal Behavior" p. 339.

4. Mandel Sherman and Thomas Henry, "Hollow Folk".

5. Marie Skodak, "Children in Foster Homes: A Study in Mental Development".

Brown summarizes the current attitude toward measurable intelligence and the respective influences of inherited and environmental factors upon it, as follows:

From the modern standpoint, intelligent behavior is behavior which arrives at goals. Until very recently psychologists and biologists always believed that this factor was almost completely determined in the germ plasm. The I. Q. as a measurement of these correlated traits was considered constant so that one accurate measurement would fix it. Recent researches have indicated quite clearly that very moderate changes in the psychological surrounding field will change the I. Q. by 15 to 20%, and cases of fairly radical changes (through psychoanalytical treatment, for instance) up to 40%. . . .<sup>6</sup>

The present-day attitude toward feeble-mindedness, then, is the result of a more accurate evaluation of mental retardation as a quantitative rather than a qualitative concept; also, as a manifestation depending upon the social training as well as the emotional stability of the individual. As Davies points out:

There is then a real and important distinction to be observed as between those intellectual subnormals who are socially incompetent and therefore feeble-minded in the strict sense of the word, and those intellectual subnormals of the sort revealed in such large numbers by the Army examinations who are reasonably adequate socially, and are therefore not properly to be called feeble-minded.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Current Diagnostic Point of View*

The etiology of mental retardation has become broader as it has become more scientific. Intelligence is no longer considered a purely hereditary mental trait; the environment is known to play an important part in its development, and, when the retardation is not too great, psychogenic factors are also considered possible causes. Since environment is an important adjunct to intellectual development, early diagnosis is imperative.

It is in the early years of life that all types of physically and mentally handicapped children are most in danger of being neglected. The first three years are of special importance both for identifying these children and for initiating adequate medical and educational measures in their behalf.<sup>8</sup>

Following the publication of Freud's studies of the unconscious and its influence upon behavior, there have developed more dynamic

6. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

7. Davies; *op. cit.*, p. 10.

8. Arnold Gesell and Catherine Amatruda, "Developmental Diagnosis", p. 311.



concepts of human psychology than were held formerly, one of which concerns the structure of the personality. In the light of these concepts, the area of disfunctioning in feeble-mindedness can better be understood, and hence allowed for, when training programs or supervision are considered. The three basic and interrelated areas which compose the total functioning personality, according to those who follow this portion of Freudian psychology, are the unconscious instinctual drives from which spring emotional needs (the *id*); one's working relationships with reality, (the *ego*); and one's so-called "conscience" or code for living, partly conscious but largely uncounscious, which plays a major role in determining action, (the *super-ego*). An important function of the *ego* is the coherent organization of the mental processes, one result of which is the obtaining of gratification from the environment. It can readily be seen then that mental retardation would result in impairment of this area of the total personality. A clear development of this thesis is given by Dr. Pearson in a recent article concerning mental defect.<sup>9</sup> He compares an analysis made by Goddard of the defect in the feeble-minded individual with an analysis of the functions of the *ego* in order to arrive at the conclusion that the mentally defective person suffers from a defect in his *ego*. Goddard described the feeble-minded person as defective in:

- 1) association of ideas by similarity;
- 2) acquired attention, the result of 1);
- 3) associative memory;
- 4) creative imagination;
- 5) ability to combine the primary emotions into more complex emotional reactions;
- 6) ability to act well voluntarily.

The functions of the *ego* (according to Freud) include:

- |                 |                      |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1) perception,  | 2) voluntary motion, |
| 3) orientation, | 4) memory,           |
| 5) inhibition,  | 6) repression.       |

Pearson discusses the techniques developed by the *ego* (as given by Kardiner) for carrying out these functions in order to show their relationship to the defects found in the feeble-minded. Furthermore, since the *super-ego* is formed as a special part of the *ego*, the defect in the organization of the latter results in a defect in the organization of the former. However, in most feeble-minded persons, the *id* does not differ from that of other people. This concept is stated by another writer on the subject as follows: "The *id* drives of the fee-

9. Gerald H. J. Pearson, "The Psychopathology of Mental Defect."

ble-minded are basically of the same nature and intensity of those normal individuals.<sup>10</sup>

Though we find authorities agreeing that the fundamental emotional needs of all individuals are identical, in the case of the feeble-minded these not only are less well under control (of the *super-ego*) because of the defect in the *ego* organization, but the individual is less able to obtain the usual gratifications from his environment. Few are the social histories of feeble-minded children that do not show a series of failures and rebuffs in school or other social relationships which are set for the pace of the normal child. Earlier and more serious than these are the results of attitudes of parents of these children, children in whom they may have been acutely disappointed or for whose disabilities they feel particularly responsible.

### *Principles of Treatment*

The above description of the personality structure of the mentally retarded child throws added light upon certain principles which should be considered basic in any training and supervision programs that may be developed to meet his needs. First in importance is that love and approval from parents just as important in the early development of these children as they are for any other children. Since a mentally retarded child may be a severe blow to the pride of a parent who sets great store on being able to make satisfactory comparisons between his child and other children, anxieties and lack of understanding regarding his disability can result in partial or complete unacceptance of him. This may be shown by some parents in overt acts of aggression or lack of interest in the child and by others in over-protection and fostering of dependency. Trained social workers and other professional persons dealing with parents find that careful interpretation is necessary in order for parents to understand that emotional satisfaction must be provided at an early age for the child "exceptional" or "different" in intelligence just as they should be for other children. Likewise, as physically handicapped children can learn to develop independence according to individual capabilities, so the mentally handicapped can be expected to respond to training programs which have been designed to fit their needs. When parents are unable to provide satisfactory family relationships and social training for these children, efforts can be made to provide substitute arrangements, such as the residential school or a foster home.

The more formal training and treatment programs for the feeble-minded, such as special classes in schools or institutional training

10. G. H. Katz, "Reeducational Therapy", p. 33.



programs, should be based on the principle that all children need to develop skills that will enable them to make the best possible adjustment to the demands of reality. Though this training will take longer, some authorities believe it can be expected to set more firmly when it has taken place than with children of average intelligence.<sup>11</sup> The more modern of educational programs have been re-evaluated in recent years in keeping with such precepts as: the necessity of complete understanding of the child in order to begin at the level where he is functioning; variety and realism in presentation of material; provision of the kind of education and training that will enable him to develop adult pursuits as satisfactorily as possible. Likewise, training and educational programs for the mentally retarded have become more realistic in their methods and aims.

Because of the patience necessary in training the mentally retarded, often with nothing startling in the way of results, and because for a long time extreme mental retardation with the social delinquency that often accompanied it were both thought to be inherited, there came to be a reluctance on the part of many specialists in children's work to want to use their facilities for this group. Dr. Stevenson mentions in an article on this subject that "too often the defeatist label, 'mental defective', has halted the effort to achieve the best-of-conditions-other-wise." He goes on to say

excepting academically, there is no 'mental defective', there is only mental deficiency variously weighed as a component along with other components in the failure of a human being to make good. . . . 'This confusion of the academic with the clinical has . . . blocked the application to these persons of the physiological, sociological and psychiatric advances that have proved useful to other persons. Even more serious it has blocked or greatly limited the study of these cases for the purpose of elucidation of physiological, psychiatric and sociological facts that might prove invaluable to the rest of humanity. It may well be that scientific scrutiny of these simpler, franker persons, mental age below 12, could have revealed to us in shorter time what has taken longer time with greater effort in the case of the highly intelligent case, e.g., through psychoanalysis.<sup>12</sup>

Not only in former eras, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, was there variation of treatment of the feeble-minded, but in the present century there is great difference in the ideologies of different govern-

11. Pearson, loc. cit.

12. G. S. Stevenson, Section on Psychiatry in *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, Vol. 46 (1941-42) p. 72.

ments regarding social planning for this group. Since the feeble-minded are not considered useful to the State, their chances even for survival are remote in Nazi Germany. Many thousands of so-called "mercy murders" have been committed there. In contrast to this is the statement in the final report of the *White House Conference on Children in a Democracy*:

In a democracy every effort will be made to counterbalance physical or mental handicaps by providing for all children as nearly as possible the equal opportunity in life and in the pursuit of happiness that was assumed to be the foundation of this Nation in its Declaration of Independence.

In line with this philosophy, the writer believes that when many community resources are lacking for all children, a disproportionate amount of time and expense should not be spent upon developing programs and facilities that can serve only one special group. It has been found that when adequate resources are available for all children, often these can, if they are flexible, serve many of the needs of special groups, such as the mentally retarded. For example, if supervised recreational facilities were available in all sections of the city these would benefit the retarded as well as normal children. Likewise, adequate programs for vocational placement for all juveniles could be expected to serve the mentally retarded who were trained for jobs as well as young people of average intelligence. The feeble-minded may be considered as part of the large group of maladjusted children for whom adequate clinical resources and certain specialized services must be available if they are to be understood and their needs provided for. Included in this larger group are children with behavior problems, not a result of mental retardation. If then, there can be provided within the community adequate services for all children, and these staffed by personnel trained to be aware of and understand individual differences of all kinds, the mentally retarded child should be recognized and provided for within these existing programs wherever possible, and at an early age, in order that certain of the social and behavior problems destined to prevent the individual from functioning in a socially competent way may be prevented.



*(The following article is being reprinted below because of errors which appeared in the February, 1944, issue of this bulletin.)*

## **COMMUNITY CONDITIONS THAT CAUSE AN INCREASE IN JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

**By Ruth Gartland**

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In discussing some community conditions that seem to cause an increase in juvenile delinquency, I will focus primarily upon certain forces within the child himself, which may be contributing factors to his difficulty in living within the law. These internal forces cannot be separated from the external forces as there is always the interplay of both but for purposes of discussion either internal or external can be emphasized. Although the war has intensified delinquency, we see familiar causes and recognize that internal, psychological and external, socio-economic forces have long needed to be understood and remedied.

The child who is an inter-play of body, mind and feelings relates to his environment as he moves through each age period. Frequently we adults have studied him and filled our records with facts about his physical conditions, his intelligence and his emotions and yet have missed really knowing him. The gap is so wide between his age period and ours that it is difficult to bridge it be we ever so willing. We know a lot about him but do not know him and have not succeeded in relating ourselves to him with the warmth and understanding so essential to the helping process. Scientific knowledge of him and his needs is indispensable but it should be converted into a warm relationship and a skilled helping process if it is to come alive and be really useful to a flesh and blood child.

Living within the law means in simple terms that the child has incorporated certain group standards and has learned to live with himself and others. How does he incorporate those standards? How does he learn to deal with his constantly changing self- his particular interplay of body, mind and feelings? How does he learn to relate that self to others and to develop the inner controls so necessary in group living? We all know that his mother- or mother substitute is his first source of love and security and that his father too takes an important part in his social-emotional development. It is only if he is paid by the love and approval of his parents that the infant and pre-school child makes the sacrifice of controlling his barbaric, instinctual wishes and yielding to social controls. If the one who sets the

controls or the limits does not love him he may never incorporate standards and may always make of any social limit an attack upon him. His development of conscience proceeds something like this— at first he responds as if saying “I won’t do it because mother is watching and she will stop me.”—Next, “I won’t do it because although mother is not watching she is in the house and might find out—then, “Mother is not at home but I won’t do it because she loves me and does not like it” and much later, “I won’t do it because it is wrong. I don’t like it and God and my parents would not approve.” At first the conscience is externalized and resides in mother (and others who have similar parental responsibilities). Later, it becomes internalized and is within the child himself. We see some of the earliest roots of delinquency then growing in the soil of parental rejection and neglect, parental ignorance of child rearing and more serious than this, parental incompetence based upon a lack of moral and social standards and a lack of intellectual, emotional and social maturity.

We have long known that the tendency to physical illness may travel through the generations. We remove children from tuberculous parents but do we remove them when they are exposed in their early formative years to emotional-social illness? What are we doing about the intellectual and emotional education of parents? Are we reaching our boys and girls in late adolescence and early maturity and helping them prepare for parenthood? What are we doing to help young parents to understand how important these early years are in the formation of later physical, emotional, social and moral stamina. Recently a well known educator said to me “Our school teachers must learn to teach the child as well as the subject. Our education needs to be better adapted to life itself. Our adolescent school children are telling us this when they are honest with us,— most of the girls say they are looking forward to marriage and the rearing of children—the boys show interest in a vocation because they know this is an essential toward the same goal of marriage and parenthood.” I thought as I listened to him that perhaps the first step in the prevention of delinquency would be the intellectual, emotional and practical education of the parents of the future in regard to marriage and parenthood.

Another growth problem which every child encounters but which the delinquent child has seldom solved is that of sharing. As an infant he tends to be first and only and thinks he is, but as he grows he finds he has to share mother with father and with brothers and sisters. Because he has had all- or thought he had- and now feels that he has only a part, he is apt to feel deprived and angry. He makes of the parents depriving parents- whether they are or not. He is angry at



them because he has to share them with others. Because he loves and needs them he is guilty about this anger and fearful that his parents may retaliate - fearful that he may lose them. He may deal with this guilt and fear by being good—or he may deal with it by directly expressing his hostile feelings and then getting punished. His delinquency—if it can be called that—then serves two purposes, to express anger caused by having to share and to ease guilt arising from the anger. The neurotic delinquent often seeks punishment because of mounting guilt and fear which arises out of unconscious rage which originated in the earliest years around an unsolved problem of sharing. Before I learned that children cannot always tell us *why* they are delinquent because the cause exists in the unconscious and not in consciousness, I asked an adolescent girl who stole why she did it. She replied with honesty "I don't know why—I don't want to—I get in trouble when I do—I tell myself I won't—I can only say that a power stronger than I am comes over me." Her description of the unconscious forces over which her consciousness had too little control was an accurate one. It was only as she incorporated greater conscious control by being given *the love of those who had standards* and a *chance for achievement* within her capacities that the symptom of stealing disappeared.

How can a child learn to solve this problem of sharing? Certainly he needs to feel that he gets love, too, even though the rival brother or sister has arrived. Since he can no longer obtain this love on a babyish basis and achieve satisfaction and growth, he must have other satisfactions supplied which gain him recognition from the parents on a more grown-up basis. Many children compete with a new brother or sister on a babyish basis because parents or parent-substitutes have failed to recognize the need for substitute satisfactions for the older child, such as toys and play outlets appropriate for his age, playmates and relationships with a widening circle of adults going beyond the immediate family and last but not least new achievement through School. If we recognized the importance of these nursery years in the establishment of group controls and social relationships, we would see the necessity for greater attention to this age group if we are to prevent later delinquency. Some of the ways through which this problem of sharing is solved are:—

1. Identification with parents who can accept and help the child control his loving and angry feelings.
2. Incorporation of parental standards— or standards of those who love them even though they are not biological parents.

3. Socially acceptable outlets for feelings through play and play-mates.
4. Learning of new skills for living through play groups and through nursery schools and kindergartens.

What attention are we giving to the many homes and neighborhoods with no such facilities? What are institutions doing to meet the special growth needs of children as these change in each age period in relation to biological—social-emotional changes? One social worker from the Juvenile Court recently asked a mother who had been referred because of neglect of her children what her idea was of the reason for the Court's interest. The mother replied "You are here to check up on me." She showed some surprise when the social worker stated the Court's function as a helping one—that of enabling the mother to plan what was best for her children and to carry out those plans. The mother replied with some resentment "If that is your purpose why did you wait so long to call after the court hearing?" The worker explained the large case loads in proportion to staff—a community condition that needs attention and the mother said she understood and added, "Do you know I never thought of planning for my children—my mother never planned for me. We were just there under her feet as my children are under mine. Come to think of it, my children do need play opportunities. They are couped up in these few, small, crowded rooms. Is there a nursery school nearby? Then, too, I've been worried about Alice's health but I couldn't afford a doctor. I'd like to learn to sew—my neighbor has a machine that I could use but I was never taught the things which could be most useful now with so many young children to clothe and feed and take care of." And after this conversation the mother with the worker's help began working out some of these problems. If the worker had blamed or preached instead of helping, this mother would have become more bitter against society and its law. She did not neglect because she wanted to do so but because she had never been taught any other way of doing. Her new teacher needed to see the person behind the filth and squalor, needed to respect the humanity of this mother and enable her gradually to overcome large obstacles in the way of successful parenthood. Social workers can well engage in pre-marital and post marital counselling!

When the child goes to school, he enters a wider world of sharing. Upon the teacher he may place many of the same feelings he has had toward parents. Upon the class members many of the same feelings he has had toward brothers and sisters. The first grade teacher has a challenging opportunity to help this growing, changing child who has many of his potentialities for later living still to be developed. She



can do much to offset destructive home influences and build constructive influences if she knows and understands the child as well as reading, writing and arithmetic. These skills are important but the well-rounded social-emotional and moral development of the child is important too and we have often overlooked it. The schools first gave attention to the mind of the child, then later to his body. He could not learn if he was not well physically. It is only recently and only in a comparatively few places that emotional-social-moral development has been deemed important and that the well-rounded growth of the child-as-a-whole in his environmental setting has become the focus of the school's interest.

Of necessity the school must deal with large numbers of children and individualization is difficult. The average child may survive but the different-from-the-average child may need to find somewhere in the school or institution some one with knowledge and skill to individualize him- to help the family, school, neighborhood, hospital individualize him and so serve him to better advantage and enable him better to take his part in those social institutions for his individual and the community's welfare. Some schools and institutions employ a social worker to make such a contribution to their mass programs.

Any difference becomes a handicap and we find some of the school children becoming delinquent who are different—they may be different physically, intellectually, emotionally-socially. They feel lost and alone in the group and their behavior is their expression of their feelings about their situation. It is their solution of their difficulty and the only solution they can make until helped to make a better one. In this school age period they still need parents and teachers who love them and accept them as they are—bright or dull, homely or handsome, in sickness and health, nervous or at ease. They also need to be helped to accept the limits of group living and to develop inner controls. They need their own group—their club wherein they can develop some sense of themselves as separate from adults- some confidence in their own developing personalities. It has been said that none of us adults can prepare children for the world of tomorrow because we do not know what that world will be—all we can do is to help the child live fully each day at a time. Are our school-age children living fully? Are we really seeing both their individual and their group needs? Are we teaching them according to the demands of the present or according to a system based upon the truth of the past but failing to utilize the new knowledge of the present? Do we see scientific knowledge as all, as an end instead of a means to the end of living fully? Do we overlook, therefore, the knowledge of philosophy and religion, both having

a separate autonomy from science, with different methods for the testing of their validity? Do we see the necessity of teaching our children the knowledge of science and philosophy and religion instead of over-teaching one and denying another? The war has forced us to see what we needed to see years before, that there are values—other than economic—which are worth living and dying for.

Our adolescent boys are being forced into a quick maturity. Will it be an artificial armour and will they return to try to recapture a lost youth? We have failed them who have not thought of their *maturing* from the minute they were born. Even an infant can be mature for one year or too infantile for one year. Rejection, over-protection, lack of opportunities to grow, physically, intellectually, emotionally—to learn and play and achieve within capacity is responsible for lack of maturity at one, at seven, or at eighteen years of age.

One adolescent boy runs from a home and school where he feels unwanted; another from a conflict within himself based upon an unsolved sharing situation or a protest against growing up; another is protesting the fact that the schools have failed the dull child. James, aged fourteen, had changed schools, his family has had some economic stress resulting in parental tension, he himself was going through certain physical-emotional changes. He disappeared from home and school and the parents came frantically to a child guidance clinic for suggestions. When asked if he had shown any interest in girls, they said he had met one he liked recently at church. This was a clue which when followed revealed that he had walked miles and miles to see her. He was so hungry and tired that her mother took him in and having no telephone wrote his parents. When I met him as the social worker at the clinic he said "I've been truant from school and was away from home too." I replied "So I heard but I know you must have had a reason." "Yes'm", said James. "It was adolescence". We adults being different from children can't assume that we know what they mean when they use our words. Hence, I asked, "What do you mean by adolescence?" He answered very seriously "Discouragements." He then said "I got to feeling that no one cared. I'm awkward and too big for the seat in school—no one seems to know me there—it was spring outside and the school room seemed stuffy. That girl seemed the only one who liked me. But I was all wrong. My Mother and Dad came to get me and seemed glad to find me and the principal at school said "Why Jim, where were you? I was just about to make you my right hand man when you disappeared." Gosh, I never would have gone if I had known that!" Perhaps all adolescents, like Jim, need to be someone's right hand man or woman. If we fail to meet their energy,



imagination and feeling needs constructively, we can only place their delinquency on our own consciences. I talked recently with three hundred young women from 18 to 23 years of age who had volunteered their services as hostesses for the soldiers. They impressed me with their earnestness, their interest in more knowledge about how best to serve and their wish for increased understanding of the soldiers and of their own relationship to them. Will we do more in the future through the professionally educated social worker to meet the needs of the child from three to twelve and the adolescent? There are other projects, those in preparation for living- that can capture the imagination of adolescents—being a hostess to soldiers is not the only one. A representative of the Board of Education said recently when helping to prepare social workers to interpret their profession to high school students, "One needs to have conviction, imagination and enthusiasm about whatever one presents. No group so quickly detects insincerity as adolescents." I asked a representative of the U. S. Health and Welfare Services whom I met in Missouri last spring to tell me why the delinquent girls of twelve to seventeen whom she was helping had run away from home. She said that she believed the first reason was centered in a lack of constructive love at home, the next in the lack of a flexible school program adapted to the needs of different groups and to the lack of a cause for which to work. They wished work which was significant and they wished meaningful social relationships within their own groups. Many said they were running away from unhappiness at home and in school; others that they were trying to meet boys and get work which would contribute to the war effort. Their idealism—their wish to serve—had been captured by the war effort. If we continue to capture it for peace—for parenthood, for group ideals which will make our democracy come true perhaps we shall have less need to be concerned about delinquency. The Courts cannot do this job alone. It is a community responsibility which touches all of us—the homes, the schools and institutions, the neighborhood, the church as well as the state and nation.

In England it has been found that delinquency has decreased in proportion to the strength of the youth movement. We have indications in our literature that in the U. S. there is recognition of the need for cooperative planning. At a Washington Conference held at the Children's Bureau, July 1941, it was stated that "plans for the day care of children should be integrated with the whole community program for public and private assistance, for social services to children, health protection, education and recreation. In an article in the January-March 1943 issue of Federal Probation the question is asked, "Are

the Judges of the Juvenile Courts willing to participate in community planning for all of the children? Are they willing to work with relatives, social agencies, institutional heads, school officials, the police, women's clubs, recreation leaders and the churches?" There is an emphasis, therefore, upon cooperative efforts toward making the community a better place in which to live.\*

The delinquency in any community is a reflection of the internal and external forces with which individuals have to deal. It is a reflection of how ill the individual has been served by the family, the school, the church, the neighborhood and the larger community into which he has been born.

Herbert Agar in "A Time for Greatness" writes "What is civilization?" We have said that it is a set of rules by which most men abide, of promises to which most men adhere. It is also a set of institutions, of homely customs, which express the experience of centuries. It has its roots in cultural disciplines, religious and humanistic which give life its meaning. Man creates these disciplines and supports them, to foster what is good in his nature and control what is bad. When he begins to break his own rules and ignore his customs, instead of making them ever more subtle and humane with the passing decades, civilization sickens at the roots.

If a civilization such as ours (which professes respect for the individual man) is to endure, it obviously cannot become the monopoly of an elite. It must become so far as possible the common enterprise of all. The purpose of our society is not for the few men of maximum strength and ambition to lead lives of Byzantine glory, but for all men to make the most of their common humanity. We are pledged to a general diffusion of culture, of independence and self respect and the means to a good life.

There has been a loss of faith in our intention to live up to this pledge. The loss of faith cannot be cured simply by an improvement in the standard of living—The millions who have lost faith are recruited from every economic class—Victory in the field is barely a beginning for us. It is essential, yet it is nothing in itself. It can only be made to bear fruit if we can lift ourselves to the practice of those "humdrum decencies" those "plainest units of rightness in action" for which Montague prayed. Here is the heaviest part of America's duty. It cannot be met on the production lines of our great factories.—It can only be met in the quality of our daily lives. How much cruelty do we indulge toward our fellow citizens of color? How much bitterness do

\*"Yardstick for Measuring Probation"



we promote in the relations between labor and business? How often do we neglect the obligations our civil liberties impose on us? The answers to such questions will determine whether we Americans do what is necessary or do nothing.

As early as 1717 John Wise said "The end of all good government is to cultivate humanity and promote the happiness of all and the good of *every man* in all his rights—his life, liberty, estate, honor, etc. without abuse to any." Since that day seven generations of Americans have been willing to repeat such words with approval. And when necessary we have been willing to fight for the words. The world is still waiting to discover whether we are willing to live them.

Are we ashamed to be as good as this? Are we so far affected with cynicism that we are afraid of being called idealists if we take such high ground? If so we have already given away America. It is impossible to hold moral convictions without believing that they must be expressed in action. It is impossible to maintain a great nation on any basis except that of moral convictions. Touch the American tradition anywhere in any speech or document or song or ritual and the same idea emerges—the idea of all men. "At the first International Conference of Social Work in 1928, I heard this quotation 'More powerful than the sword is an idea whose time has come.' If we had expressed in action this *idea of all men* then, we might have been spared this present sword. Perhaps it is not too late to *live* this idea now. Our delinquent children are a constant reminder of the action which we as a community need to take to give *all* children their rightful heritage of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Dr. Franz Alexander in his recent book "Our Age of Unreason" reminds us, however, that it is a futile undertaking to devise a blueprint of a new order without preparing men emotionally to live in it. Elimination of existing conditions calls for an educational development of psychological attitudes which are not yet universal. He mentions the need for a social outlook opposing and challenging the philosophy of violence, for social activity based on a mature creative power instead of adolescent competitiveness arising from insecurity, for the development of new standards in which the creative use of the mind, the contributing to knowledge, art or the amenities of everyday life stands high, for recognition of the fact that the development of the social sciences (and their application) is at present more urgent than further technical advance and for an international cooperation based on a conscience that does not know national boundaries. Any community which will undertake a cooperative program of reeducation in social emotional-moral values for both children and adults will reap rich rewards in its own increased welfare and its decrease in delinquency.











N O T I C E

THIS VOLUME IS INCOMPLETE

THE FOLLOWING ISSUES ARE ON ORDER:

VOL. 19 NO. 3 1944

NOTICE

THIS VOLUME IS INCOMPLETE

THE FOLLOWING ISSUES ARE ON ORDER:

VOL. 10 NO. 2 1914